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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 12 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 82: Effects of atomic radiation
(continued) (A/55/46; A/C.4/55/L.6 and L.7)

1. **Mr. Pohan** (Indonesia) expressed appreciation to the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and welcomed the report contained in document A/55/46. The report was a comprehensive review of the effects of radiation exposure from various sources and depicted the magnitude and scale of such exposure. The report also drew attention to new challenges relating to global levels of radiation which the Scientific Committee intended to meet with new initiatives for assessing the sources of radiation, their levels and effects.

2. In the area of nuclear testing, previously undisclosed information had come to light concerning the number and yield of such tests. In that regard, it had become imperative for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to come into force and for countries to refrain from both atmospheric and underground testing.

3. For quite some time, Indonesia had maintained a cooperative working relationship with the Scientific Committee, whose reports had increased the understanding of radiation and its harmful effects. In view of the growing reliance on nuclear energy worldwide, Indonesia recognized the importance of adopting safety standards for the protection of the environment. That called for information-sharing on deficiencies in the operation of nuclear power plants and the implementation of appropriate safety measures. In that regard, it was to be hoped that the Scientific Committee and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would play complementary roles. Indonesia commended the Scientific Committee's cooperation with other international organizations as well.

4. The Scientific Committee's role in disseminating information, especially in the areas of health, sustainable development and even peace and security, had become increasingly important. Indonesia commended its work and would continue to support its activities.

5. **Mr. Bhundar** (India) noted with pleasure that, in accordance with its mandate from the General Assembly, the Scientific Committee had completed its review of problems in the field of radiation and had submitted its thirteenth comprehensive report on sources and effects of ionizing radiation. India shared the Scientific Committee's concern about radiation exposure and potential health effects. The data provided on the effects of radiation from various sources indicated the adherence of various countries to the regulations in their atomic energy programmes.

6. India welcomed the continuing scientific efforts to understand the basic mechanisms for the impact of radiation on biological systems, as documented in the annexes to the Scientific Committee's report for 2000. For its part, it had initiated a systematic study of the effects of continuous low level exposure at the cellular, molecular and clinical levels on the health of the population in high natural background radiation areas in the state of Kerala. The results so far did not show any deleterious effects attributable to such radiation. India hoped that the Scientific Committee would devote its efforts to studying data on high natural background radiation areas in other parts of the world.

7. India shared the concern expressed by the Scientific Committee over the incorrect reporting by some sectors of the media on thyroid cancer incidence and other health effects of the Chernobyl accident.

8. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) expressed appreciation to the Scientific Committee for its publications and report, which were used by various international, regional and national organizations to plan measures for the protection of populations from the effects of atomic radiation. Egypt commended the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), IAEA and the World Health Organization (WHO) for their cooperation with the Scientific Committee in conducting comprehensive research on the sources and effects of ionizing radiation which could serve as a veritable textbook example of international cooperation.

9. The Egyptian delegation welcomed the high degree of attention devoted by the Scientific Committee to radiation resulting from atomic testing in the atmosphere, especially as it was considered one of the fundamental man-made sources of ionizing radiation. In that connection, Egypt expected that the Scientific Committee would pursue its research, especially in the light of recent information on the levels of radiation to which populations in the vicinity of such testing were exposed.

10. The peaceful use of atomic energy could offer significant benefits in medicine, industry and agriculture. Egypt accordingly wished to recall the need for transfer of nuclear technology to the developing countries with no preconditions or discrimination, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

11. In the light of Egypt's call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone and of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the region of the Middle East, his delegation wished again to proclaim the need for all nuclear facilities in the region to be covered by the IAEA's safeguards system. In that context, it should be recalled that the nuclear reactor in the Negev desert region of Israel, which was subject to no international controls or IAEA safeguards, constituted a real threat to Egyptian security and to the safety of peoples of other countries.

12. Egypt wished to become a sponsor of the draft resolution that was to be submitted under the item and hoped it would be adopted by consensus. The Egyptian Government was prepared to maintain and expand its cooperation with the Scientific Committee in all fields.

13. **Mr. Suanes** (Cuba) said that since its creation in 1955, the Scientific Committee had been playing an important role in providing objective, balanced and independent information on radiation sources and their effects on man and the environment. The Scientific Committee's reports were used as reference materials and facilitated the development of national and international standards for radiation protection. His delegation, which had a high regard for the Scientific Committee's work, wished to underline the need for its continued cooperation with various organizations and institutions of the United Nations system, including WHO, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and IAEA. Enhanced cooperation, interchanges and consistent support for the Scientific Committee's work would make it possible to achieve even more impressive scientific results for the benefit of mankind.

14. In most countries of the world, atomic energy was acknowledged as an alternative means of satisfying increasing energy demands. The use of atomic energy in medicine, industry and agriculture was continually expanding and had taken on great importance for the developing countries. Countries that had attained a higher level of development should accordingly give other countries access to the benefits associated with the use of nuclear energy. That was why, in the discussions on the current item, the question of transfer of technology and technological cooperation took on particular importance. A special responsibility for truly promoting transfer of and access to technology – on an equitable basis and with no preconditions – lay with the countries which, owing to historical circumstances, were better endowed with resources.

15. Although Cuba was not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and, accordingly, was bound by no obligations to conclude safeguards agreements with the IAEA, it had voluntarily placed its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards and was observing them rigorously. In October 1999, Cuba had signed with the Agency an additional protocol to its safeguards agreement and had been the first country in the world to conclude an agreement on the application of the safeguards system under INFCIRC/66. Cuba would continue to develop its programme for the peaceful use of nuclear energy under conditions of complete openness to scrutiny and had taken up the cause of nuclear disarmament and total prohibition of nuclear weapons.

16. The Cuban delegation had taken note of the statement by the representative of Belarus and in that connection wished to indicate that in recent years Cuba had accepted for treatment more than 10,000 children who had suffered as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

17. In conclusion, he noted that the work of the Scientific Committee was gaining greater importance every day for averting the dangerous effects of radiation on man and the environment and that only international cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy could eliminate that threat. The primary goal of joint efforts must be to do away with all nuclear weapons and threats connected with their possession. Mankind had no real alternative to general and complete disarmament, just as there was no alternative to cooperation.

18. **Mr. Hafiana** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that nuclear pollution was a serious problem of the times and his country had been giving it serious attention in view of the threat it represented for present and future generations. His delegation was worried by the rising level of radiation exposure, particularly in Arab countries, owing to nuclear activity in nuclear-weapon States that raised concern on the part of the entire

international community, and especially of the Arab States. Israel had all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, had rejected the repeated appeals of the international community to convert the region into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and was refusing to allow IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities. That could create a real threat and even lead to a disaster with unimaginable consequences. That was why it was essential to take all possible steps to force Israel to place its nuclear reactors under IAEA inspection and to destroy its nuclear arsenal.

19. Despite the optimism generated by the nuclear safety measures already adopted by numerous countries, additional action was needed to do away with the threat. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya considered that regional efforts should be focused on ensuring that scientific achievements in the nuclear field were used for peaceful purposes and hoped that a regular exchange between countries of information on the research undertaken would be set up.

20. It was essential to put an end to all activities that caused radioactive pollution of the land, sea and air. The nuclear Powers must stop all nuclear testing for military purposes and move without delay to develop and implement a programme for the destruction of all nuclear weapons.

21. **Mr. Islam** (Pakistan) said that the United Nations Millennium Declaration highlighted the need to "ensure that the benefits of new technologies ... are available to all". It was accordingly necessary to share resources and information in all areas of modern research, including on the effects of atomic radiation. His delegation was satisfied with the Scientific Committee's work in assembling radiological information and studying sources of radiation exposure and considered that its role in carrying out research and analysis in those areas had been pivotal.

22. Member States hoped to continue to benefit from the Scientific Committee's information on the sources and effects of radiation as the scientific basis for estimating radiation risk, developing radiation protection and safety standards and regulating radiation sources. Pakistan remained committed to providing the relevant data about doses, effects and risks from various sources of radiation.

23. Scientific research was geared to minimizing the effects of both natural and man-made radiation sources. The increase in radiation exposure from man-made sources was a matter of common concern. Although the largest doses of exposure came from the medical use of radiation, nuclear medical research must nevertheless not stop, owing to its immense benefits to mankind. The latest results of such research must be shared with all Member States, but at the same time, adequate measures must be taken against radiation exposure with a view to minimizing its adverse effects. Further research was also needed on the impact of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor on the health of people in the region.

24. Research on the hereditary effects of radiation exposure was also vital, and Pakistan looked forward to the submission of the Scientific Committee's comprehensive report for the year 2001.

25. Pakistan would continue to assist the Scientific Committee in its work in the interests of achieving the collective goal of minimizing the effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the environment.

26. **Mr. Zohar** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the assertions by the representatives of Egypt and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya that Israel's research in the field of nuclear energy constituted a threat to those countries were not at all in line with reality.

27. In recent years Israel had been falsely accused of radioactive pollution of the groundwater on its border with Egypt. What had been lost from sight, however, was that the groundwater in that area flowed towards Israel: hence that country could not possibly be the source of the pollution.

28. In its research activities, Israel consistently attached paramount importance to strict safety requirements, whose observance was monitored not only by internal but also by external bodies, including at the governmental level. As to the issue of proliferation of nuclear weapons mentioned by the representatives of Egypt and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, it was outside the competence of the Fourth Committee.

29. Israel supported the Scientific Committee's efforts to improve the health of all people on the planet. Israel's achievements in radiation use for medical purposes were well known, and it was prepared to share them with the rest of the world in a forum such as WHO.

30. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, pointed out that there was nothing new in his country's mention of the Israeli reactor. He referred the representative of Israel to a number of resolutions and documents, including the resolution adopted every year by the First Committee concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. In it, the General Assembly called upon countries that had not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place their nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards. Egypt was making the same appeal.

31. He likewise cited the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which Israel was urged to accede to the Treaty and to place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA control.

32. Thus, there were international standards and regulations to which all countries of the region should adhere, especially Israel, which must likewise comply with the requirement of placing its nuclear activities under IAEA safeguards.

33. **The Chairman** announced that Bulgaria, France, India, Malta, the Philippines and the Russian Federation had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.6.

34. He had been requested by the delegations concerned to postpone the consideration of the draft resolution until a later stage in the Committee's work because of ongoing consultations. If there was no objection, he would accede to that request.

35. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) *(continued)*

Draft resolution on the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/C.4/55/L.5)

36. **Mr. Donigi** (Papua New Guinea) recalled that the original draft resolution on the small Non-Self-Governing Territories was contained in the report of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/55/23, chap. XIII, sect. F). The changes incorporated in the revised draft concerned primarily the twenty-fourth preambular paragraph and paragraphs 14 and 15 on the question of tax havens.

37. The Special Committee had noted that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development had established a mechanism for initiating, by July 2001, a dialogue on ways of improving international financial controls. In that connection, the Special Committee called on the administering Powers to assist the Territories concerned in establishing the financial controls required to combat money laundering, the circulation of proceeds from criminal activity and the financing of crime. At the same time, the Special Committee held the view that the introduction of financial controls must not be used as a pretext for limiting the freedom of the Territories concerned to set rates of taxation for persons who were domiciled in or citizens of those Territories.

38. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution on small Non-Self-Governing Territories would be adopted by consensus.

39. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Special Committee had demonstrated flexibility in its dealings with the administering Powers, as attested to by the amendments incorporated in the draft resolution under consideration. His delegation was pleased to observe the efforts made by some administering Powers in the context of their official cooperation with the Special Committee. Those administering Powers that were still not cooperating with the Special Committee must move in that direction, especially in view of the task of eradicating colonialism facing the world community.

40. *Draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.5 was adopted by consensus.*

41. **The Chairman** announced that the Committee had concluded its consideration of agenda item 18. There had been a fruitful exchange of views and in most instances consensus had been achieved, reflecting the importance attached by the majority of delegations to the question of decolonization.

Other matters

42. **Mr. Islam** (Pakistan) announced that if his delegation had been present at the Committee's eighth meeting, it would have voted in favour of the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 88, 89 and 90 and in favour of the draft decision relating to military activities. It would have voted against the proposed deletion of paragraph 7 of the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 89. It would have joined the consensus on the draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 91 relating to Western Sahara, New Caledonia and Tokelau and the draft decision on Gibraltar.

43. **Mr. Al-Merri** (Qatar) said that if his delegation had been present at the eighth meeting, it would have voted in favour of the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 88, 89 and 90, in favour of the draft decision relating to military activities and against the amendment mentioned by the previous speaker.

44. **Mr. Cha** (Republic of Korea) said that if his delegation had been present at the eighth meeting, it would have voted in favour of the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 88 and 89 and against the draft resolution relating to military activities. It would have abstained during the vote on the draft resolution under agenda item 90 and would have joined the consensus on the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 91 and on the drafts relating to Western Sahara, New Caledonia, Tokelau and Gibraltar.

45. **Mr. Hafiana** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that at the eighth meeting, his delegation had voted against the amendment to the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 89, but its vote had not been reflected in the records of that meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.